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Chair: Mr. Gunnarsson ..... (Iceland)

Contents

Agenda item 64: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 64: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions

1. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that there were over 66 million refugees around the world, and several countries were hosting more than 1 million each. Interlocking conflicts had uprooted people across entire regions, and decades-long crises were driving a new generation of children and young people to undertake dangerous journeys in search of safety. The topic of refugees and migration had become central to national and international politics and played a significant role in bilateral relations between States. World leaders had adopted a bold and visionary plan to address the situation, in the form of the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. However, millions of men, women and children who had been driven from their homes continued to face uncertainty, with little hope of a solution.

2. Thus far in 2017, more than 2 million refugees had left their home countries as a result of new or recurring crises. That included more than 600,000 refugees from Myanmar who had entered Bangladesh to escape a new wave of devastating violence. Additional donor support was needed to fund the major emergency response operation under way, and early and resolute action must be taken to address the root causes of the tragedy and pave the way for the safe, dignified and voluntary return of refugees to Myanmar.

3. The crisis in South Sudan had become more severe and complex. The people had been abandoned by their political leaders and were living in desolation and despair. The number of displaced had reached 4 million people, or one third of the population, compared with an estimated 4.5 million at the height of the civil war before independence. Neighbouring countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda had maintained open borders and were implementing progressive and generous refugee policies, but international support was not keeping pace with the huge needs resulting from the impact of the crisis on their local services, economies and infrastructure.

4. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, violence in the Kassaï region and elsewhere had created 100,000 refugees in 2017, and the number of internally displaced persons in the country had doubled since 2015 to almost 4 million. Humanitarian operations were being scaled up, but there was a need for much greater donor support and more substantial political efforts to stem the growing crisis. An upsurge of violence in the Central African Republic had led to a 50 per cent rise in internal displacement as compared with 2016. The total number of persons displaced within and outside the country now exceeded 1 million, and more than 12,000 refugees had left the country in September 2017 alone. Progress towards resolving the crisis in Mali had also slowed.

5. A number of long-standing crises remained deeply entrenched. Hundreds of thousands of persons had been uprooted by conflict and severe drought in Somalia, despite significant efforts by the Government to improve security and the rule of law. The number of civilian casualties in Afghanistan had reached its highest level in more than a decade, and more than 2.3 million Afghan refugees remained in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. The conflicts in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, which were responsible for a quarter of forced displacement globally, were moving into complex new phases. Almost 3 million people were internally displaced in Yemen, at a time when the country was facing looming famine, dealing with a large-scale cholera outbreak and experiencing daily the impact of a conflict waged with blatant disregard for civilian lives.

6. In Central America, tens of thousands of men, women and children were on the move in search of refuge from gang violence. Refugees and migrants from Eritrea, Somalia and elsewhere continued to face grave exploitation and abuse along the central Mediterranean route to Europe, which stretched from south of the Sahara through Libya to Italy. Hundreds of thousands of persons from Burundi, Ukraine, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and elsewhere had also been displaced.

7. The world would continue to face new displacement crises unless the problem was addressed with unity of purpose. Protection for refugees was being eroded in many countries and regions as a result of fragmented and often unilateral responses driven by short-term political agendas. As principled leadership gave way to irresponsible demagoguery, some States had closed their borders and adopted policies of deterrence and exclusion. However, there had also been a parallel groundswell of solidarity with refugees, rooted in civil society and often reinforced through the strong leadership of mayors, business leaders and other public figures. Most importantly, major refugee-hosting countries had continued to demonstrate extraordinary levels of generosity and commitment to refugee protection. The fundamental challenge at the heart of the New York Declaration was to assist refugee-hosting countries by supporting their efforts, strengthening protection, mitigating the impact of the presence of large numbers of refugees in their territories and truly sharing responsibility.

8. The New York Declaration was a resolute reaffirmation of the values of solidarity and protection. Humanitarian action remained key to saving lives and addressing the immediate impact of a refugee influx, as evidenced by the current situation in Bangladesh. However, such action must be underpinned and sustained by broader investment and support. In that connection, the comprehensive refugee response framework annexed to the New York Declaration provided a new model that placed the rights, interests and potential of refugees and their hosts at the heart of a comprehensive response and involved a broad range of instruments and actors. The members of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees recognized the need to ease pressure on host countries and communities, enhance the self-reliance of refugees, increase the rate of resettlement in third countries and create conditions conducive to voluntary return. Those priorities, which were all urgent and equally important, were underpinned by the fundamental obligation to receive refugees and provide them with protection. Countries that complied with that obligation delivered a global public good, and their contribution must be supported at the international level by responsibility-sharing and predictable and sustainable acts of solidarity. That new approach was being rolled out alongside the reform of the United Nations development system and the development of the Secretary-General's peace and security reforms, which placed greater emphasis on conflict prevention and mitigation and efforts to sustain peace.

9. The comprehensive refugee response framework was being applied by Belize, Costa Rica, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, Kenya, Mexico, Panama, Somalia, Uganda, and the United Republic of Tanzania, with financial and technical support from donors and partner organizations. Efforts were also being made to implement the framework at regional level in order to address the Somali displacement situation and to strengthen protection and promote solutions in Central America and Mexico. Those efforts, combined with the lessons that would be drawn from the current thematic consultations and other comprehensive approaches that had been taken around the world, would result in a powerful global compact on refugees with the potential to drive meaningful change, provided that concrete action was taken to fulfil the commitments made. The countries and communities that received and hosted refugees were demonstrating remarkable generosity, and many were implementing policies to promote the inclusion and self-reliance of refugees. However, the foundations of such hospitality inevitably weakened in the absence of sustained international support and responsibility-sharing. It was therefore essential to quickly step up efforts in that regard through efficient new financial instruments that could be rapidly deployed, the early engagement of development actors and the private sector, and the expansion of access to resettlement and other third country solutions.

10. Since development action and financing were central to the new framework, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was strengthening several key alliances. In that connection, the World Bank's concessional financing facility and the allocation of $2 billion in grants and loans for low-income refugee-hosting countries through its International Development Association would be game changers in the approach to building refugee resilience and supporting host countries and communities. UNHCR was also deepening its partnerships with multilateral and regional development banks and other development partners. Bilateral development agencies were helping host countries to include refugees and host communities in national development plans, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the principle of leaving no one behind. UNHCR was also enhancing its engagement with United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, the corporate sector, philanthropists, faith communities, sports foundations and other civil society actors. Solid partnerships with entities such as the International Organization for Migration were important in order to fully leverage complementary roles in mixed situations involving both asylum and migration. The new status of the International Organization for Migration as a related organization to the United Nations and the development of the global compacts on refugees and migration provided important opportunities to further clarify roles.

11. The early pursuit of solutions was also central to the new framework. Only half a million refugees had been able to return home in 2016, and some had done so in less than ideal circumstances. Pressure for premature return remained a concern and could intensify. In the Syrian Arab Republic, military operations had paved the way for the spontaneous return of significant numbers of internally displaced persons and a small number of refugees, but most were returning to circumstances of bleak devastation in the absence of viable alternatives. Furthermore, 1.8 million Syrians had been newly displaced between January and September 2017. Nevertheless, signs of resilience were appearing inside and outside the country, which must be nurtured. While it was premature to promote repatriation, the response should be adapted to support persons in the country who were finding their own paths towards solutions. At the

same time, it was critical to sustain international protection and support for Syrian refugees during the complex transition. The inter-agency regional refugee and resilience plan for Syrian refugees was only 49 per cent funded, and the available funds were currently $180 million lower than they had been at the same time last year.

12. The resilience component of the plan, which aimed to bridge the gap between humanitarian and development action, was only 39 per cent funded. The concerns of host Governments about waning funding and the long-term impact of a sustained refugee presence could result in increased pressure on refugees to return to fragile situations. He therefore called on donors to intensify and sustain their support. Greater stability was also emerging in some areas of Iraq and the Lake Chad Basin, although major protection risks remained. Return to those areas must be on an entirely voluntary basis and levels should not exceed the capacity of the countries to receive and absorb returnees.

13. In such situations, finding solutions for refugees was closely linked to strengthening protection and securing solutions for internally displaced persons. UNHCR was working to ensure that it was predictably and consistently delivering on the responsibilities that it had assumed under existing inter-agency arrangements. The commemoration in 2018 of the twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles for Internal Displacement would provide an opportunity to galvanize support to help States to implement the Guiding Principles in law, policy and action.

14. Resettlement must also play an important role in solving the refugee crisis. Close to 1.2 million refugees around the world needed to be resettled, but fewer than 80,000 resettlement places were expected to have been made available by the end of 2017, which was less than half the number provided in 2016. That worrying situation must be addressed and other legal pathways to settlement in third countries should be increased, as it was important to offer real alternatives to dangerous journeys at the hands of smugglers and traffickers, including along the central Mediterranean route. In that regard, he welcomed the facilitation by the Government of Niger of a new emergency transit mechanism for persons in need of international protection. UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration were strengthening their involvement along the entire route, in particular in Libya, to improve access to protection and solutions. Such efforts must be complemented and reinforced by targeted development and security investments in order to tackle smuggling and trafficking and help States strengthen systems to protect and support refugees. The work of UNHCR in Libya remained constrained by security and governance shortcomings and other restrictions on humanitarian work, although progress was being made.

15. Progress was also being made on the issue of statelessness. More than 60,000 persons had acquired a nationality or had a nationality confirmed in 2016. Policy reforms had been approved in Brazil, Ecuador, Kenya, Madagascar, Thailand, members of the Economic Community of West African States and the countries of the Great Lakes. However, there was a lack of resolve to tackle major protracted situations of statelessness. The rise in forced displacement also increased the related risks, including arbitrary deprivation of nationality. The statelessness of the Rohingya refugees who had fled to Bangladesh was closely linked to restrictions on the freedom of movement, access to basic services and livelihoods of the Rohingya in Myanmar and was thus a key aspect of the discrimination and exclusion they had experienced for decades. The solution to their plight was their voluntary, safe and dignified return to Myanmar. However, that would not be possible or sustainable without the restoration of their security and rights, including through the resolution of the matter of their statelessness, in a context of inclusive development that would address the deep-seated poverty affecting all communities in Rakhine State. He reiterated the willingness of UNHCR to provide expertise, advice and support to Bangladesh and Myanmar in their ongoing efforts to resolve the crisis and, in particular, to plan for the repatriation of the refugees.

16. The UNHCR mandate to secure protection and solutions to displacement and prevent and resolve statelessness remained constant and would continue to drive the work of the Office. However, as the comprehensive approach proposed in the New York Declaration began to take root and a wider range of entities were becoming involved in addressing refugee flows, it had become necessary to carefully reflect on the particular contribution that should be made by UNHCR. Its work would continue to be shaped by the legal, policy, operational and moral authority embodied in the protection and solutions mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and by its international cross-border remit, strong field presence and proximity to displaced and stateless persons. Fulfilment of that mandate must continue to involve robust operational engagement. At the same time, it was important to identify where UNHCR must take direct action and where it would add most value by helping other actors to contribute their own expertise and resources. In that connection, he had launched a series

of reform initiatives to preserve and strengthen the capacity of the Office to adapt. They included a review of the design, structure and processes of UNHCR headquarters to increase its efficiency and better align its functions to provide optimum support for field operations; a significant reform of its human resources systems; and a series of measures to further promote inclusion, diversity and gender equity. The capacity of UNHCR to provide high-quality data relating to refugees and host communities was being enhanced, and an important joint initiative with the World Bank had recently been launched. UNHCR was making significant investments in cash-based interventions, with particular emphasis on inter-agency platforms managed by the private sector. UNHCR was also continuing to strengthen its oversight systems, including through an ambitious new risk management initiative.

17. In 2016, voluntary contributions to UNHCR had reached an all-time high of nearly $4 billion, which had brought the total available funds to $4.4 billion. However, the year had ended with a 41 per cent funding shortfall. The estimated available funds for 2017 were $4.2 billion, which would leave nearly 50 per cent of needs unmet. The picture for 2018 was even more uncertain, which was forcing UNHCR to make very difficult choices. The shortfall in funding for major ongoing crises, in particular in Africa, gave serious cause for concern. For example, programmes to address the situations in Burundi and the Central African Republic were currently funded at just 11 per cent. He therefore appealed to all Member States to sustain and increase their support through flexible funding and early contributions, in order to avoid uncertainty and enable UNHCR to use funds where the needs were greatest.

18. He would include a proposed global compact on refugees in his annual report to the General Assembly in 2018, as requested in the New York Declaration. The proposed text would have two parts: the comprehensive refugee response framework, as set out in annex I of the New York Declaration, and a programme of action that would underpin the comprehensive framework and support its application in specific contexts. A robust consultation process had been undertaken with a view to ensuring consensus support from Member States for the text. The aim was not to introduce new standards, but rather to identify and develop practices and mechanisms that could inform, reinforce and complement the protection and support provided by host countries and drive progress towards solutions. The High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges in December 2017 would provide an opportunity to take stock of progress in applying the comprehensive refugee response framework and the results of the consultation process. In early 2018 a series of formal consultations on the draft with Member States would then take place to refine the text, with intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations participating as observers.

19. The adoption of the New York Declaration had been a groundbreaking recognition at the highest level of the shared responsibility to address and resolve refugee flows. The promise that it embodied must be translated into action through the provision of the necessary funding, technical support, resettlement places and other concrete acts of shared responsibility. Practical measures must be taken to ensure access to protection, and progressive policies promoting refugee inclusion and self-reliance must be adopted. Above all, there was a need for determined collective action to put an end to the brutal conflicts that were continuing to drive so many people from their homes, and to find solutions for the millions of people who had been uprooted.

20. **Ms. Habtemariam** (Ethiopia) said that her delegation had appreciated the High Commissioner's recent visit to Ethiopia and particularly his attendance at an Ethiopian refugee camp on World Refugee Day. As one of the largest refugee-hosting countries, Ethiopia advocated long-term solutions to refugee issues and enhanced protection for refugees. In February 2017, it had issued a comprehensive refugee response framework to help it fulfil its commitments in the context of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, including with regard to the integration of refugees, work permits, access to education and civil registration.

21. She shared the High Commissioner's concerns about funding gaps, limited resettlement opportunities in Africa and the lack of international support and solidary for countries hosting large numbers of refugees. Ethiopia had received funding for only 25 per cent of its comprehensive refugee response framework, which was likely to lead to severe cuts to food supplies for refugees. She asked how UNHCR planned to ensure predictable and sustained funding and to increase resettlement opportunities in the process leading up to the adoption of the global compact on refugees and if it would be necessary to introduce a new framework to ensure regular funding for refugee issues.

22. **Ms. Stener** (Norway) said that her delegation was alarmed by the high numbers of forcibly displaced persons and the protracted nature of many refugee situations. Moreover, she agreed that the New York Declaration was a highly significant document and that the global compact on refugees would become the

instrument which the world needed only if all States agreed to distribute responsibility equally and globally. The growing gap between humanitarian needs and available resources was a serious concern. She asked how UNHCR would mobilize additional resources and streamline costs to support future refugee responses, including in the roll-out of the comprehensive refugee response framework. Moreover, it was crucial for UNHCR to remain engaged in the protection and assistance of internally displaced persons, especially as there was no comprehensive international approach for dealing with them. It would be interesting to hear how UNHCR would improve the response of the United Nations system to internally displaced persons, especially with regard to strengthening coordination between development and humanitarian agencies.

23. **Mr. Hassani Nejad Pirkouhi** (Islamic Republic of Iran), referring to the persistent lack of support for host countries, asked what capacity UNHCR had to assess the impact of hosting a large number of refugees and to measure the degree to which States were failing to assume their part of the global burden. During negotiations on the New York Declaration, a proposal had been submitted for third countries to host ten per cent of the world's refugees and migrants. He asked why countries were proving so reluctant to take part in resettlement schemes.

24. **Ms. Al-Emadi** (Qatar) said that the report of the High Commissioner underscored the scale of the challenge posed by the massive numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide. The international community must make a collective commitment to address the root causes of displacement, examining why so many millions of people had been compelled to leave their homes, as well as a pledge to address the humanitarian repercussions of that phenomenon. It was also critical to find political solutions to the numerous conflicts and crises around the world that had given rise to massive flows of refugees and internally displaced persons, and to take steps to alleviate the burden placed on countries hosting large refugee populations. At the same time, every effort must be made to uphold the human rights of refugees and migrants and facilitate their integration into host country societies.

25. In line with its obligations with regard to refugees and internally displaced persons, Qatar's Government and civil society organizations continued to provide humanitarian assistance to ameliorate the situation of those vulnerable populations and to work closely with relevant United Nations specialized agencies.

26. She asked the High Commissioner to elaborate on the prospects for addressing the needs of refugees and internally displaced persons, particularly when so many countries were embroiled in conflict and many host countries were unable to absorb any more refugees.

27. **Mr. Canay** (Turkey) said that protracted crises and long-term displacement had become the new normal. The High Commissioner was therefore right to call for an improved response to refugee issues, as the international community must seek a new way of working. He urged all relevant stakeholders to participate actively in the establishment of a global compact on refugees and for Member States in the meantime to make full use of the potential of the comprehensive refugee response framework. He hoped that the global compact would contribute to truly comprehensive solutions based on existing international legal frameworks and to equitable sharing of responsibilities and burdens. Turkey supported increasing resettlement quotas as a way of opening legal pathways for forcibly displaced persons. He asked how the High Commissioner viewed current trends in resettlement numbers and how those figures might evolve in the lead-up to the adoption of the global compact.

28. **Mr. de Souza Monteiro** (Brazil) said that the migration bill recently adopted by his country epitomized the position which Brazil had taken in relevant international forums, including in support of the non-criminalization of migration and the protection of migrants' rights. Since the adoption of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees in 1984, the Latin American and Caribbean region had been praised for its approach to refugees. In preparation for the proposed adoption of a global compact on refugees, Member States of the region would meet in Brasilia in February 2018. It would be interesting to hear the High Commissioner's view of the potential for regional consultations to contribute to improving the refugee situation, particularly those held in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

29. **Mr. al-Hakim** (Iraq) said that his country was surprised by the claim made in the report of the High Commissioner that many people in Iraq remained stateless, as Iraq had taken a number of legislative steps to combat statelessness. Indeed, under Iraqi law, any child of an Iraqi father or mother was entitled to Iraqi citizenship, regardless of whether he or she had been born within the country or abroad. Furthermore, article 18 of the Iraqi Constitution enshrined the right of all Iraqis to citizenship, prohibited the withdrawal on any grounds of Iraqi citizenship acquired at birth, and

entitled all persons who had had their citizenship revoked to demand its reinstatement.

30. His Government deeply appreciated the efforts by UNHCR to assist refugees and internally displaced persons in Iraq and called for further assistance to those vulnerable populations, particularly as winter was approaching. He underscored his Government's commitment to take all necessary steps to facilitate the safe return of all Iraqi internally displaced persons to their homes.

31. **Ms. Mwangi** (Kenya) said that Kenya had hosted large numbers of refugees for decades and appreciated the role of its longstanding partnership with UNHCR in mitigating the plight of forcibly displaced persons and providing refugees with the recognition and documentation which they required. The contribution of UNHCR and its Special Envoy on the Somali Refugee Situation to the success of the Special Summit on Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development held in Nairobi in March 2017 was particularly noteworthy, as it had led to the adoption of the Nairobi Declaration on Somali Refugees. She asked what progress UNHCR had made in mobilizing international support to address the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan, where renewed violence, drought and the threat of famine had aggravated the refugee situation and placed a greater strain on host countries. She would also like to know how to encourage Member States to move beyond rhetoric and start to share the burden and responsibilities of developing countries which hosted large numbers of refugees.

32. **Mr. Mikayilli** (Azerbaijan) said that UNHCR should step up its engagement for internally displaced persons and that the international community and the United Nations should re-examine their entire approach towards such persons. He asked the High Commissioner how he expected the global compact on refugees to address the situation of internally displaced persons and whether he thought it was feasible to establish a protection framework for internally displaced persons.

33. **Mr. Furumoto** (Japan) said that the same solidarity shown during negotiations on the New York Declaration would be needed in tackling the current refugee and displacement situation. Japan therefore welcomed efforts by UNHCR to establish the global compact on refugees and to implement the comprehensive refugee response framework. Japan stood ready to support implementation by offering the knowledge and experience of the Japan International Cooperation Agency. He asked what barriers existed to the coordination of efforts among the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors and how they could be overcome.

34. **Mr. Sigurðsson** (Iceland) said that in 2017 his Government had signed a framework agreement on funding with UNHCR. In cooperation with UNHCR, close to 200 Syrian refugees had been resettled in Iceland, and there were plans to take in at least 40 more in the months to come. The country had also welcomed a number of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons from Africa deemed by UNHCR to be at risk. In addition, the number of asylum seekers had risen in recent years.

35. There was strong support in Iceland for the resettlement programme for Syrian refugees. The Government, local municipalities, the Icelandic Red Cross and volunteers from among the general public, who were assigned to help individual families, all played a role in the programme. Such a community-driven approach helped refugees to integrate into society and promoted cultural understanding. The volunteers and the refugees acted as ambassadors for the programme by sharing their experiences with friends and family, which helped to combat xenophobia and raise awareness. He would be interested to know what else Iceland could do to ensure the successful integration of refugees.

36. **Ms. Mballa Eyenga** (Cameroon) said that her delegation welcomed the efforts described in the report to find sustainable solutions to the refugee crisis. It was pleased that attitudes towards the issue of forced displacement had changed and that host countries were given support. While humanitarian and development aid was essential, there was also a need to find political solutions, with a view to preventing and resolving conflicts.

37. There had been an influx of refugees to Cameroon, which was a challenge given that the host communities themselves were struggling. To address the issue, the Government had started working with the United Nations and humanitarian organizations to develop periodic humanitarian response plans covering four regions of Cameroon. The technical support provided by the Government was intended to improve coordination among the various sectors and facilitate the implementation of activities. Ensuring continuous access to education for children from both refugee and host communities was a particular priority.

38. **Mr. Maung** (Myanmar) said that his delegation was fully aware of the international community's concerns regarding the flow of refugees from Myanmar to Bangladesh. His Government was trying to understand the reasons behind the flow. Individuals

stranded at the border said that they wanted to cross into Bangladesh because of the difficulties they faced in daily life and safety concerns owing to the decreasing Muslim population in northern Rakhine State. Although the local authorities had encouraged them to stay and given them assurances regarding the provision of food and security, the individuals concerned had wanted to go to Bangladesh and had travelled to the border of their own volition.

39. His Government would continue implementing the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State with a view to addressing the root causes of the problem. Myanmar was committed to ensuring the voluntary, safe and dignified return of the refugees. All individuals who had identity papers issued by the authorities of Myanmar or who were able to provide evidence of having lived in Myanmar, such as title deeds or school attendance records, were eligible to return. There was no limit on the number of people who could be repatriated. If there was disagreement regarding the eligibility of a particular individual to return to Myanmar, both sides would consider all of the documents and information and reach an agreement.

40. Myanmar would seek the services of UNHCR when necessary. To improve the efficiency of the repatriation process, its officials had recently participated in a workshop on voluntary repatriation organized with the assistance of UNHCR. The work of the Implementation Committee and the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development was progressing well.

41. **Mr. Kadiri** (Morocco) said that his delegation would welcome additional information on the strategic directions defined by UNHCR to guide its work for the coming five years, in particular any specific recommendations contained therein.

42. The adoption of a global compact on refugees presented a unique opportunity. All Member States agreed that there was a need to rethink the way in which refugee crises were addressed. His delegation would be interested to know the benefits of such a compact, given that refugees were already protected under international law. What impact would the compact have on the ground and what sorts of provisions would it contain?

43. **Mr. Sarufa** (Papua New Guinea) said that his delegation welcomed the strategic directions defined by UNHCR and wondered what Member States could do to support them. Papua New Guinea had taken note of the efforts of UNHCR to reinforce the credibility of and confidence in resettlement processing, including by launching a resettlement innovation project, as it had a small number of refugees who needed to be resettled. In October 2017, the processing centre for asylum seekers had closed and the country was in the process of identifying resettlement places. His delegation would, therefore, be interested to hear more about the project.

44. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he was encouraged by the willingness of Member States to host large numbers of refugees, provide financial support and offer resettlement places, and their support for the global compact on refugees, including the manner in which it was being developed. The compact would be based on appendix I to the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and would include a programme of action addressing practical issues. Although the process of developing the compact was taking place in Geneva, UNHCR was committed to keeping delegations in New York informed and would be holding a detailed briefing for them in December, before the start of formal consultations.

45. The strategic directions of UNHCR represented the action areas in which the Office concentrated its efforts, namely "protect", "respond", "include", "empower" and "solve". The compact would reinforce those directions, in particular "include", which was essential because it enabled refugees to join the economy and become self-reliant, and "solve", which was, together with "protect", the most important of the strategic directions. The compact was a political instrument. It would have no normative value and would not replace the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or any other legal instrument. Instead, it was intended to improve coordination, mobilize support and help Member States to find solutions to forced displacement.

46. He commended those States that were taking part in additional initiatives related to the compact, such as the Nairobi Declaration on Somali Refugees and the meeting in Brasilia in February 2018, in which he would take part. In October 2017, he had been in Honduras for the launch of an important regional framework. Such initiatives would contribute to the compact by building on lessons learned.

47. Development actors, primarily the World Bank but also national development cooperation offices, were playing a growing role in efforts to address the situation of refugees. They had a valuable contribution to make in areas that benefited little from humanitarian aid, such as education, employment and support for host communities. He was pleased that the Government of Bangladesh had asked the World Bank for support to cope with the influx of refugees from Myanmar. The World Bank was also supporting Lebanon and Jordan

through the global concessional financing facility, and refugees in dozens of other countries through the International Development Association refugee sub-window. Member States should ask for help at the very beginning of an emergency. In addition to focusing on humanitarian aid, there was a need to consider the long-term picture.

48. He agreed that cost savings must be made. In accordance with the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing, UNHCR had joined forces with other organizations, cut costs and reduced inefficiencies. The World Bank had invited UNHCR to collaborate on a joint data project, which would help to create a reliable data system on forced displacement and refugees.

49. While internally displaced persons had been mentioned in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, they were not at the core of the global compact on refugees. UNHCR was examining how it could fulfil its inter-agency responsibilities during internal displacement crises, especially in terms of protecting internally displaced persons, finding solutions, managing camps and supporting relief efforts. Noting the tendency to prioritize refugees over internally displaced persons, he said that UNHCR must show donors that both issues were equally significant. With development organizations contributing more, resources had been freed up that could be spent on protection, which would benefit both internally displaced persons and refugees. He had appointed a special adviser on internally displaced persons to review the situation, with a view to making UNHCR a more reliable partner in that area.

50. He shared the concerns expressed by a number of representatives regarding the fall in resettlement places offered by certain countries, notably the United States of America, although he noted that it still had the world's largest resettlement programme. UNHCR had received guarantees from other States, including many European countries, that they would offer more resettlement places. In addition, Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay had recently pledged to resettle refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic and from Central America. Nevertheless, he was concerned about the decline as resettlement was an indispensable tool for responsibility-sharing.

51. With regard to the situation in Myanmar, refugees stranded at the border said that they did not have enough support. He urged the Government to allow humanitarian agencies to access northern Rakhine State, so that they could help those who remained there and ensure that conditions were adequate before others returned. He was pleased that UNHCR had been able to participate in the workshop on repatriation. He urged both Myanmar and Bangladesh to include UNHCR in negotiations. Not only could UNHCR provide expertise and support, but its presence would also lend legitimacy to any repatriation agreement.

52. Lastly, in response to the comments made by the representative of Iraq regarding his report, he said that, contrary to what the representative of Iraq had understood, he had in fact commended Iraq for its efforts to grant citizenship to stateless persons, which had helped to reduce statelessness.

53. **Mr. Diaz Carazo** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Georgia, said that the European Union had received 1.2 million asylum seekers in 2016. He commended the generosity of the low- and middle-income countries that hosted the vast majority of refugees, and the solidarity of host communities accommodating refugee populations, often for extended periods. The European Union reaffirmed its commitment to support host countries and communities, both within the Union and worldwide. At the same time, it underlined the need to strengthen protection mechanisms for refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants, improve their living conditions and formulate long-term solutions to address their situation.

54. It was essential to do more to prevent forced displacement, inter alia, by addressing its root causes. As had been stressed repeatedly, a comprehensive long-term approach was needed to achieve that objective, involving not only the humanitarian community, but also political and developmental stakeholders. The European Union would continue to accord the highest priority to conflict resolution and prevention initiatives.

55. The European Union fully supported the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which underscored the importance of global responsibility-sharing and international solidarity in efforts to address refugee situations, and it also welcomed the global campaign proposed by the Secretary-General to counter xenophobia. The Union, moreover, commended UNHCR for leading efforts to draft the comprehensive refugee response framework, which underscored States' firm commitment to address refugee situations in a more comprehensive and dignified manner, and it urged all States to make full use of that framework's potential.

56. The European Union's new development-oriented policy framework for addressing forced displacement aimed to foster the self-reliance and resilience of displaced persons and their host communities by promoting sustainable livelihoods and facilitating access to basic services and education. It was using that policy framework in its regional development and protection programmes for refugees and host communities and would implement it systematically in all future initiatives to address displacement crises.

57. The European Union deeply appreciated the work of humanitarian relief workers and volunteers, who regularly put their lives at risk to assist those in need, acknowledging that UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations were under enormous pressure to deliver and often faced serious budgetary constraints. Indeed, while it was encouraging that UNHCR was receiving greater financial support than at any time in the past, its expenditure had quadrupled over the previous decade to almost $4 billion and significant funding gaps remained, making it likely that substantial needs would remain unmet. The European Union therefore urged donor countries to consider increasing their support to UNHCR and to engage with the Office of the High Commissioner to identify ways to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations, in accordance with the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing.

58. **Mr. Mminele** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that SADC countries reiterated their attachment to the principles enshrined in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, as well as the Organization of African Unity Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa, which was the key instrument governing refugee protection in Africa. Accordingly, SADC countries were committed to respecting and giving full effect to the principle of non-refoulement and to international standards for refugee protection, and urged other countries to do likewise.

59. SADC was concerned that huge numbers of people had been forcibly displaced from their homes as a result of persecution, conflict or other situations of violence. While the arrival of refugees in industrialized countries received significant public and political attention, the impact of refugee flows continued to fall disproportionately on the developing world. SADC was particularly concerned that UNHCR was allocating fewer financial resources to Africa; international support and the provision of adequate and predictable funding, commensurate with the scope and scale of the challenges on the ground were key to formulating appropriate and durable solutions in the continent. It was, moreover, critical to increase levels of unearmarked funding.

60. SADC fully supported the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the comprehensive refugee response framework, and commended the countries that had started applying that framework in their efforts to address large-scale refugee situations. SADC also congratulated UNHCR for expanding its sources of funding by engaging with the private sector and international financial institutions, and particularly welcomed the allocation by the World Bank International Development Association of $2 billion for countries hosting refugees. While SADC countries welcomed that assistance, they cautioned against any initiatives that would further burden developing countries in Africa hosting large numbers of refugees.

61. While continuing its efforts to address the plight of refugees and migrants, SADC was also striving to address the root causes of forced displacement. Those causes included under-development, which exacerbated poverty, inequality and unemployment and could lead to armed conflict. SADC Member States were also drawing up a regional policy framework on the management of asylum seekers and refugees, in line with their commitments pursuant to the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.

62. SADC welcomed the definition by UNHCR of a set of strategic directions to guide the work of the Office until 2021 and the launch in 2016 of the updated UNHCR Ten-Point Plan on Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration. SADC Member States would continue to work with relevant stakeholders to uphold the internationally-recognized rights of all forcibly displaced persons present on their territories.

63. **Mr. Almeri** (Saudi Arabia) said that his country was at the forefront of countries offering humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people. Saudi Arabia hosted some 2.5 million Syrian citizens, who enjoyed complete freedom of movement within the country. Hundreds of thousands of Syrians had obtained Saudi Arabian residency permits and, like other residents, were entitled to free education and health care services. Indeed, more than 140,000 Syrian students were receiving free education in Saudi Arabian schools. Syrians in Saudi Arabia also enjoyed the right to work and were exempt from certain taxes. The Government was also providing support to millions of Syrian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, while many private Saudi citizens continued to make voluntary financial contributions in

support of numerous initiatives to assist the Syrian people.

64. Yemeni citizens in Saudi Arabia were also granted residency and provided with job opportunities, and some 285,000 Yemenis were receiving an education free of charge. The Saudi Arabian Government had also provided over $400 million to alleviate the plight of Yemeni internally displaced persons and Yemeni refugees in Djibouti and Somalia, and almost $60 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Saudi Arabia had also pledged to provide $30 million to support Afghani refugees in Pakistan and $20 million to assist Rohingya Muslims.

65. **Mr. Furumoto** (Japan) said that, in the light of the increasing number of humanitarian crises worldwide, it was crucial to enhance efforts to address the situation of refugees. It was, moreover, clear that UNHCR was being asked to shoulder ever greater responsibility.

66. Japan had already contributed some $150 million to UNHCR in 2017, including emergency grants to fund UNHCR operations in Asia, the Middle East and Africa. It commended efforts by the Office of the High Commissioner to strengthen its partnership with the World Bank, and trusted that that partnership would provide an example of effective coordination between humanitarian and development agencies.

67. The proposed comprehensive refugee response framework complemented the humanitarian-development nexus promoted by the Japanese Government. Japan therefore warmly welcomed the holding of a special segment on the framework at the 2017 Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (ExCom), and noted with interest the implementation of the framework in Africa and Latin America.

68. The promotion of human security was one of the pillars of Japan's foreign policy. Through the Japan International Cooperation Agency and relevant international organizations, Japan was, inter alia, providing vocational training and technical assistance in Uganda to improve rice farming and was conducting a comprehensive survey in the north of that country to assess the needs of South Sudanese refugees and host communities. The results of that survey would be made available in the near future to the Ugandan Government and relevant humanitarian and development actors with a view to supporting host communities, enhancing the self-reliance and facilitating the repatriation of refugees, and supporting peace building efforts in South Sudan. In order to prevent conflict — one of the main causes of displacement — it was critical to deliver seamless long-term support, promote reconstruction and stability, alleviate poverty and foster economic development.

69. **Mr. Cerutti** (Switzerland) said that his country was extremely concerned at the trends described in the report of the High Commissioner. The global compact on responsibility-sharing for refugees must provide for enhanced support to States and communities hosting the displaced, and must also reaffirm the need to uphold humanitarian and protection principles, including the principle of non-refoulement and the right to request asylum. Switzerland trusted that the global compact would strengthen the political will of all relevant stakeholders to enhance responsibility-sharing and set forth strategies for addressing the root causes of displacement. It called for development stakeholders to play a greater role in efforts to address the needs of persons forced from their homes, particularly in situations of prolonged displacement. The international community must also ensure that internally displaced persons, including those displaced by natural disasters, were offered adequate protection and assistance.

70. Switzerland welcomed the definition by UNHCR of a set of strategic directions to guide the work of the Office of the High Commissioner until 2021 and ongoing efforts to enhance the management of the Office, including at UNHCR Headquarters. It also supported efforts by UNHCR to strengthen its provision of assistance to internally displaced persons and urged the Office to enhance its interagency cooperation with a view to achieving that objective. He urged Member States to provide UNHCR with adequate support so that it could fulfil its mandate effectively.

71. **Mr. Morales López** (Colombia) said that the Colombian Government had adopted legislation and implemented numerous policies, plans and programmes to improve the situation of internally displaced persons in the country who had been forced from their homes by armed conflict. Victims of forced displacement were offered protection, assistance and redress, and the National Victim Assistance and Comprehensive Reparation System (SNARIV), coordinated efforts to that end by relevant institutions in Colombia at the national, departmental and municipal levels.

72. Although many internally displaced persons in Colombia were returning to areas from which they had been expelled, many had decided not to return to their original homes, and to rebuild their livelihoods in the areas where they had settled. Special measures had been adopted to uphold the rights of internally displaced members of ethnic groups and provide for collective redress.

73. In 2016, Colombia's Land Restitution Unit had adopted indicators to facilitate the restitution of land to its owners. Almost 5000 families had obtained legal orders for their land to be returned to them and more than 35,000 land restitution requests were being processed. The Ministry of National Defence was, moreover, enforcing the safe and secure implementation of the country's land restitution policy.

74. **Mr. Schettino** (Italy) said that most of the world's forcibly displaced persons had fled their homes to escape armed conflict, generalized violence or human rights abuses. Regrettably, many of those individuals also fell victim to abuse, exploitation and violence, often by members of human trafficking networks, as they undertook perilous journeys in search of international protection. It was clear that the world was witnessing its worst humanitarian crisis ever and, with the repercussions of displacement falling disproportionately on developing countries, it was critical to reassess the relationship between human mobility and development and ensure that emergency humanitarian interventions were complemented by longer-term development initiatives.

75. Italy commended the efforts of UNHCR to promote a paradigm shift in the world's response to forced displacement through its development of the comprehensive refugee response framework, and welcomed the long-term partnerships it had forged with the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and other development partners with a view to easing the pressure on host countries, enhancing refugee self-reliance, expanding access to third-country solutions and supporting conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity. The nature and scale of contemporary refugee crises were inextricably linked to the growing complexity of the world's armed conflicts, as well as to the rise of violent extremism, increasingly prevalent sexual and gender-based violence, and the activities of human traffickers and transnational organized criminal groups.

76. As a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2017, Italy was seeking to highlight the positive synergies that existed between the work of the Council and the mandate of UNHCR. Indeed, by striving to prevent and resolve conflicts, the Security Council could play a pivotal role in supporting efforts by UNHCR to address the situation of refugees, the displaced, returnees and stateless persons.

77. **Mr. de Souza Monteiro** (Brazil) said that the development of a global compact on responsibility-sharing for refugees would mark an important milestone for the international community as it strove to implement the commitments made in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. In 2018, Brazil would hold a regional consultative meeting on the global compact, which must take into account the capacities of individual countries; most countries hosting refugees were in the developing world, and they often faced significant challenges meeting the needs of their own populations, let alone the needs of refugees. Brazil believed that effective responsibility-sharing would help those countries uphold basic rights and promote social inclusion.

78. It was critical to expand opportunities for admission to third countries, so that asylum-seekers could seek refuge in countries that offered them adequate protection. Indeed, although it was crucial for States to provide adequate financial support to host countries, those States must not, at the same time, adopt overly-restrictive immigration policies. In that regard, Brazil was concerned that certain States had adopted policies to restrict the entry and permanence in their territories of refugees and asylum seekers that violated international law and humanitarian principles.

79. Brazil had strengthened its long-term open-door policy on refugees. It had made a commitment to resettle some 3,000 people affected by the conflict in Syria, as well as displaced persons from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, including, in particular, women and children who had been subjected to violence. Brazil had, moreover, recently adopted an amended migration law, which, inter alia, strengthened migrants' rights and facilitated the integration of foreign nationals into Brazilian society. That law also established procedures for determining statelessness and facilitated the acquisition of Brazilian citizenship by stateless persons, in line with the UNHCR I Belong campaign.

80. **Ms. Cohen** (Australia) said that the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants was a landmark achievement. Australia was already translating the commitments it had made in the Declaration into action and, in addition to the multi-year flexible funding that Australia provided to UNHCR, had provided $6.9 million to support its implementation of the comprehensive refugee response framework in Ethiopia and Uganda. Australia was also expanding its resettlement programme, inter alia, by increasing the number of resettlement places reserved for refugees from certain comprehensive refugee response framework pilot regions, and had made multi-year funding commitments to support projects to enhance the resilience of refugees and local communities in protracted displacement crises.

81. Australia strongly supported the comprehensive refugee response framework but emphasized that

lessons learned from global refugee responses, including in the Asia-Pacific region, must guide subsequent actions. Australia stood ready to engage with other States to draw up more equitable ways to share global responsibility for the welfare of refugees and emphasized that the success of the global compact on responsibility-sharing for refugees was contingent on the support of all States and key stakeholders. Australia commended the ongoing efforts by UNHCR to address the needs of internally displaced persons, and emphasized that States were obliged to offer protection and security to internally displaced persons within their jurisdictions and ensure unimpeded humanitarian access to those persons at all times.

82. The Australian Government had a long-standing commitment to upholding the rights of women and other vulnerable groups within society, including persons with disabilities, who comprised 15 to 20 per cent of the global refugee population, and she urged UNHCR to take practical steps to ensure that the rights enshrined in the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action were fully respected.

83. **Mr. Idris** (Eritrea) said that his country was fully committed to upholding the values and principles enshrined in international instruments on refugee protection and believed that, in order to deal effectively with the global refugee crisis, it was crucial to address the underlying causes of displacement, including recurrent and protracted conflicts, military adventurism and attempts to instigate regime change in other States.

84. Legal, well-regulated and non-discriminatory channels for international migration must be established. Furthermore, States could more effectively provide refugees with the protections they were entitled to under international law by drawing a distinction between refugees and economic migrants and, to achieve that objective, it was essential for UNHCR and destination countries to take action to strengthen vetting mechanisms for asylum seekers.

85. More effective international cooperation was needed to ensure the safety and security of people on the move, both on land and at sea, and combat human trafficking and smuggling. Eritrea deplored the fact that certain governments in Africa were fomenting political unrest and recruiting armed insurgents in camps that were funded and jointly administered by UNHCR. The failure of certain camp administrators to exercise effective oversight and the failure to hold them accountable for their actions had facilitated the misuse and diversion of resources earmarked for refugees. Meanwhile, camp residents were often mistreated or were exploited by human traffickers.

86. Eritrea opposed all forced repatriations or expulsions of its nationals by other States. Instead, it encouraged Eritreans to return home voluntarily and offered returnees assistance to help them reintegrate into society. Although certain organizations, including UNHCR, continued to make allegations that returnees were liable to prosecution in Eritrea, a recent European fact-finding mission had concluded that those allegations were baseless.

87. Before issuing eligibility guidelines for assessing the international protection needs of asylum seekers, UNHCR should seek input from the country concerned, rather than second-guessing its policies or seeking input from third parties. In that connection, the claim by UNHCR that Eritrean economic migrants were bona fide refugees was utterly incorrect and had exacerbated the trafficking to Europe of young people from Eritrea and other countries in the region. UNHCR was, once again, urged to review and amend its eligibility guidelines for asylum seekers from Eritrea.

88. **Mr. Al-Hussaini** (Iraq) said that the takeover by the terrorist group Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) of a number of Iraqi towns and cities had forced huge numbers of people to seek shelter in safer areas. Indeed, since June 2014, more than 3.6 million people had been forced from their homes by terrorist groups. With the support of the United Nations, donor countries and relevant international organizations, the Iraqi Government had taken prompt action to address that huge challenge and ameliorate the situation of internally displaced persons. To that end, it had established a high-level committee to provide them with shelter and relief assistance and ensure that they enjoyed access to relevant services. The Government had established camps for internally displaced persons in safe areas and provided them with financial and other forms of support. It had also simplified the procedures by which they were issued identity documents, was striving to integrate internally displaced students into schools and universities, and continued to pay monthly salaries to internally displaced employees.

89. In their campaign to liberate Iraqi cities from ISIL control, the Iraqi armed forces made every effort to save the lives of civilians, established safe corridors for their evacuation from combat zones and took all possible steps to rescue civilians used as human shields by ISIL terrorist gangs. The care taken by the Iraqi armed forces to preserve civilian lives and uphold humanitarian principles had, in fact, been widely acknowledged, including by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq.

90. **Mr. Kashaev** (Russian Federation) said that cooperation with UNHCR was essential, as it was the main international body responsible for the protection of refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons. The High Commissioner had visited Moscow in February 2017 and taken note of the prospects of further cooperation with the Russian Federation. His country intended to continue to offer UNHCR comprehensive assistance in the future, including donor support.

91. The Russian Federation had considerable experience in dealing with refugees, having welcomed citizens of some 57 States as migrants or refugees in recent years, primarily from Ukraine, Syria and Afghanistan. It had done everything possible for the more than 1 million Ukrainian citizens who had arrived following the internal armed conflict in Ukraine and was grateful to the High Commissioner for his positive assessment of its efforts in that regard. It observed the norms of international law in its treatment of foreigners and stateless persons seeking asylum and was currently revising its laws to reduce the waiting time and cost of asylum applications and provide for the establishment of a new institution for the protection of asylum seekers.

92. The Russian Federation particularly appreciated efforts by UNHCR to decrease statelessness worldwide, including in the former Soviet Union. It also welcomed the leading role played by UNHCR in drafting the global compact on refugees and introducing a framework of measures on refugees. Provided that Member States worked together, the lives of those whom UNHCR was mandated to protect should improve significantly.

93. The most effective response to contemporary migration challenges was to promote conflict resolution or socioeconomic development in order to create conditions in which refugees would voluntarily return home and reintegrate into society. The complex refugee situation prevalent in Europe and other areas was largely due to the irresponsible intervention of Western countries in the internal affairs of sovereign States of the Middle East and North Africa in a bid to destabilize them and forcefully overthrow Governments viewed as undesirable. Responsibility for the provision of assistance to refugees and forced migrants must primarily be placed on States which had taken part in such interventions. By contrast, the concept of responsibility-sharing was merely a way of foisting blame on others. Member States must show solidarity if the international community was to resolve refugee issues in accordance with the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol.

94. **Ms. Brooks** (United States of America) said that her country was providing more than $8 billion in humanitarian aid in 2017, including almost $1.5 billion to UNHCR. The United States remained steadfast in its support for the Office of the High Commissioner and urged all States to support its work through the provision of flexible, robust and predictable funding. Indeed, all States must follow through on their commitments to increase their financial contributions and promote refugee inclusion and self-reliance.

95. In the light of growing funding gaps and the scale and scope of the challenges posed by global refugee and migrant flows, it was crucial for relevant actors to make every effort to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of their operations. The United States called on UNHCR to promote transparency in the implementation of activities provided for in its 2018–2019 budget and to engage in open dialogue with relevant stakeholders, in order to maintain trust in the Office of the High Commissioner and help mobilize predictable sources of funding. UNHCR must, moreover, continue to adopt a people-centred approach when designing and implementing policies. The United States commended the managerial reforms being implemented by the Office of the High Commissioner, which would, inter alia, enhance oversight and accountability at all levels and empower it to respond effectively to emerging challenges. She urged UNHCR to continue to engage with multi-sectoral partners as well as with developmental and non-traditional actors, and to pursue a solutions-oriented approach from the onset of emergencies, even when such solutions appeared elusive.

96. **Mr. Qassem Agha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Syrian refugee crisis was yet another instance of Governments and regimes exploiting the suffering of the Syrian people. Those same Governments had used the humanitarian crisis in Syria as a political weapon aimed at toppling the Syrian State and transforming the country into a failed State in order to unleash chaos. The founder of Wikileaks had claimed in an interview with the Press Project that the mass exodus from Syria was a part of a United States strategy against the Syrian Government, because voiding the country of its inhabitants, particularly the educated, would bring it to the brink of destruction. The European "open door" policy therefore supported the policy of the United States.

97. Everyone had seen how Turkey had used Syrian refugees as an excuse to pressure the member States of the European Union to expedite Turkey's European Union accession process. At the same time, Turkey continued to violate the human rights of refugees,

especially children, in Turkish camps, where many had fallen victim to sexual abuse, rape and the illegal trade in body parts. Syrian children were also the victims of forced marriages and a high percentage of Syrian brides in the refugee camps in Jordan were minors at the time of marriage. European reports showed that 20 per cent of all refugees in Europe were from Syria. He wondered why the representative of the Saudi Arabian regime had claimed that his country was hosting 2.5 million Syrian refugees, when it was indicated in the High Commissioner's report (A/72/12) that there were only 133 refugees in Saudi Arabia. Qatar, moreover, hosted only 177 Syrian refugees.

98. There was a clear answer to the questions of how to ensure that more Syrians did not leave their homes and how refugees could be helped to return home. Terrorism against the Syrian people must be stopped, and Security Council resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015) should be implemented. Furthermore, the unilateral measures taken by certain Governments against the Syrian people, which had paralyzed the economy, destroyed infrastructure, closed hundreds of factories and increased unemployment, must be ended.

99. **Mr. Rasuli** (Afghanistan) said that huge numbers of people around the world had been forced from their homes. Extremely vulnerable, those people were often subjected to violence or abuse, including at the hands of human traffickers. In its response to the ongoing massive flows of refugees and internally displaced persons, the international community must, first and foremost, seek to address the needs of those vulnerable populations. However, unless all relevant stakeholders combined forces to address the root causes of displacement, the suffering of refugees and internally displaced persons would continue unabated.

100. More than 2 million Afghans had fled their homes as a result of political instability, extremism and terrorism and were registered as refugees in neighbouring countries. The issue of refugees and returnees was therefore of central importance to the Government of Afghanistan, which remained committed to ensuring the safe return and sustainable reintegration of Afghan refugees and was working closely with UNHCR and other international actors to that end. The Government had also established the High Commission for Migration and the Executive Committee for Internally Displaced Persons and Returnees, which was working to mainstream reintegration into existing development frameworks. Furthermore, with the support of UNHCR, the Government had also drawn up plans and programmes for the delivery of essential services to internally displaced persons and Afghans returning from abroad. Steps were also being taken to foster development and facilitate the acquisition by returnees of plots of land with a view to ensuring their sustainable reintegration into society. The Government of Afghanistan was also promoting regional economic integration, reforming the country's civil service and making every effort to restore peace across the country; all of those steps would facilitate efforts to address the needs of the displaced. He reiterated his Government's deep gratitude to UNHCR, relevant international organizations and host countries for the assistance they continued to provide to millions of Afghan refugees and internally displaced persons.

101. **Ms. Pham** Thi Kim Anh (Viet Nam) said that the international community must adopt a global approach and search for durable solutions when addressing the challenges posed by the world's large-scale flows of refugees and internally displaced persons, and underscored that those challenges were closely linked to the absence of peace, security and respect for human rights. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants established fundamental principles for resolving challenges related to refugee protection and displacement, and proposed durable solutions that could facilitate burden- and responsibility-sharing. Furthermore, in its efforts to ease the plight of the displaced, the international community must accord particular attention to the situation of women and children, who were especially vulnerable to exploitation by human traffickers and smugglers.

102. States must transform the commitments they had made in the New York Declaration into tangible actions on the ground, inter alia, by finding more equitable ways to share responsibility for the welfare of refugees, taking decisive political action and providing adequate financial resources, technical support and humanitarian assistance. Countries should, moreover, implement people-centred social and economic policies and promote the integration of refugees into society, inter alia by facilitating their access to education and employment opportunities.

103. **Ms. Mwangi** (Kenya) said that, like the High Commissioner, her country was concerned that some countries had implemented measures aimed at keeping refugees in their regions of origin. In some regions, refugees and asylum seekers were being pushed back at or across borders, sometimes into conflict zones, at variance with the principle of non-refoulement, or were subjected to violence and abuse, in clear violation of the principles enshrined in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. Kenya was also gravely concerned that many countries had significantly reduced the number of places available for refugee and migrant

resettlement. It trusted that the proposed global compact on responsibility-sharing for refugees would contain clear and explicit language on the need for more equitable and predictable burden- and responsibility-sharing in large-scale refugee movements, and concurred with the High Commissioner that resettlement would remain an indispensable tool for achieving that objective.

104. Kenya had maintained an open-door policy for the admission of refugees and would continue to provide them with protection in accordance with its national laws and the country's obligations pursuant to international instruments. Since October, 2016, Kenya had witnessed a significant increase in the number of new arrivals from South Sudan; they represented some 109,000 of the almost 200,000 refugees hosted in the Kakuma refugee camp. The Government was working closely with UNHCR to protect and promote the self-reliance of South Sudanese and all other refugees in the country, and would continue to adopt comprehensive regional approaches in order to deliver durable solutions that addressed their needs. Furthermore, in 2017, Kenya, with the support of the European Union and UNHCR, had hosted the special summit on protection and durable solutions for Somali refugees and reintegration of returnees in Somalia. The summit had adopted the Nairobi Declaration on Somali Refugees, which was a forward-looking regional political commitment to address the protracted Somali refugee situation. Kenya was implementing the Nairobi Comprehensive Plan of Action for Durable Solutions for Somali refugees, which would, inter alia, foster an enabling environment for the safe, sustainable and voluntary return and reintegration of Somali refugees. Kenya called on the international community to support that endeavour, in line with the principle of responsibility sharing enshrined in the comprehensive refugee response framework.

105. Hosting large numbers of refugees presented complex challenges for Kenya, which continued to receive inadequate support from the international community to address refugee needs. The Kenyan Government had been forced to close the Dadaab refugee camp, which had become one of the largest refugee camps in the world and a base for recruiting, planning, and executing terrorist attacks in Kenya, and the Government had endeavoured to relocate the refugees housed there, including through voluntary repatriation to safe areas of Somalia, in accordance with the tripartite agreement concluded between Kenya, Somalia and UNHCR. Since 2014, approximately 75,000 Somali refugees had been voluntarily repatriated to Somalia, in safety and in dignity, and another 13,000 had been resettled in third countries. Kenya urged the international community to take action to promote the stability of Somalia and trusted that the commitments made at the London Somalia Conference, held in May 2017 and at previous international conferences on that country would be honoured.

106. **Mr. Hassani Nejad Pirkouhi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that destabilizing policies, foreign occupation and terrorism continued to force millions of people from their homes. With the repercussions of displacement falling disproportionately on developing countries, every effort must be made to promote global responsibility- and burden-sharing when addressing refugee situations. No single country, by itself, could deal effectively with massive influxes of people and it was therefore deeply regrettable that most States had failed to follow through on their pledges to support countries hosting large numbers of refugees; that situation was unsustainable.

107. For some four decades, Iran had been offering shelter to more refugees than any other country and the influx of so many people had had a significant impact on its economy and society. A robust and transparent mechanism for assisting countries hosting large numbers of refugees was sorely needed, especially as some of those countries, including Iran, faced significant challenges or had been targeted by inhumane sanctions and, consequently, their provision of essential services to refugees could no longer be guaranteed.

108. Iran offered extensive healthcare and educational services to the refugees it hosted, and also offered them employment opportunities. Some 420,000 refugee children were in school and 4500 were attending university in Iran, while approximately 700,000 refugees had found employment in the country. Iran could not, however, continue to shoulder the significant burden posed by such large number of refugees indefinitely.

109. Iran once again urged the international community to take all necessary steps to resolve the refugee problem, inter alia by promoting the sustainable repatriation of refugees to their countries of origin or their resettlement in third countries. In that regard, it was regrettable that the number of refugees in Iran who had been offered homes in third countries over the previous two decades was significantly lower than the number of children born each year to refugee parents in Iran. The responsibility to protect refugees must not be borne by only certain States or regions, and asylum seekers must be allowed to request asylum in the country of their choice, as prescribed in international legal instruments.

110. **Mr. Benarbia** (Algeria) said that humanitarian conditions had worsened significantly in many countries in the previous twelve months, and noted with particular concern the statistics contained in the report by the Secretary-General on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa (A/72/354). With the repercussions of displacement falling disproportionately on developing countries, every effort must be made to promote global responsibility- and burden-sharing when addressing refugee situations, in line with the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. To that end, UNHCR must enhance the mechanisms it employed to map refugees' needs, so that the efforts exerted by host countries and communities to meet those needs was given due consideration. UNHCR must also provide more information on the impact of refugees on host countries' national development plans.

111. Algeria believed that, in line with the spirit of the Convention of 1951, the voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity of refugees to their home countries remained the most appropriate way to address refugee situations. Furthermore, to implement the innovative response mechanisms called for in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, it was crucial for the international community to uphold its collective commitment to provide assistance, offer protection and formulate durable solutions to refugee situations.

112. As part of its longstanding efforts to help refugee populations in North Africa and beyond, Algeria continued to provide humanitarian assistance and engage in sustained efforts to facilitate conflict prevention and resolution. Algeria had responded to numerous humanitarian emergencies and was hosting a large number of refugees from Syria, Libya, Mali, Niger and other African countries. Algeria also continued to host large numbers of Sahrawi refugees who had fled their homes in the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara, and continued to advocate for their voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity within the framework of a durable solution that would uphold their right to self-determination. Algeria thanked donor countries who had provided assistance for the Sahrawi refugees on its territory and called on other countries to do likewise. Algeria would also welcome any further action by UNHCR to meet their needs.

113. **Ms. Velichko** (Belarus) said that the mandate of UNHCR was particularly relevant because of the recent surge in the number of displaced persons worldwide and the significant number of States dealing with the consequences. Any response to such weighty challenges should entail both strategic and practical efforts. On a practical level, Member States should undertake tangible actions in line with their commitments under the New York Declaration, as part of an inclusive process reflecting the interests of all parties. The resulting global compact must be effective in reducing the rising numbers of internally displaced persons. At the national level, Belarus had consulted with all stakeholders to decide on the country's approach to future global agreements on refugees and migrants. On a strategic level, Member States should coordinate their actions more closely. The rise in refugee numbers in recent years had been a direct consequence of wars and conflicts, many of which had been caused by individual States flouting international law. Most of the issues which had flared up since the beginning of the 1990s stemmed from unfinished business at the end of the Cold War. Her Government had suggested launching a new process to promote peace, whereby key global players took part in discussions on a strategic vision for constructive relationships.

114. **Mr. Canay** (Turkey) said that the human tragedy of displacement was compounded by the financial and socioeconomic hardship experienced by host countries and communities. The adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants underscored the international community's acknowledgement that it was critical to find more effective ways to address mass displacements. Turkey, moreover, supported efforts by UNHCR and other stakeholders to develop a global compact on refugees by 2018, and implement the comprehensive refugee response framework.

115. In line with the commitments it had made at the World Humanitarian Summit, held in Istanbul in 2016, Turkey was promoting cooperation between humanitarian and development actors with a view to enhancing provision of assistance to the displaced, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. To find durable solutions to crises, it was important to adopt a multi-stakeholder, "whole of society" approach, not only with a view to providing humanitarian assistance to those in need, but also to strengthen the resilience of refugees and host communities.

116. Turkey was hosting almost 3.3 million refugees, the vast majority from Syria. It continued to protect Syrians on its territory, provided them with free education and healthcare services and allowed them to work. It was also collaborating with the European Union to reduce the number of refugees attempting to cross the Aegean Sea. Indeed, Turkey's efforts to save refugee lives at sea and combat human trafficking were acknowledged by all; he would not respond to the baseless allegations made by the Syrian regime representative. Instead, he urged the international community to share responsibility for meeting the

immediate and long-term needs of refugee communities in Turkey in an equitable manner.

117. Turkey was very cognizant of the world's protracted refugee crises, including the decades-long Palestinian refugee crisis, and was deeply concerned by the humanitarian tragedy facing Rohingya Muslims. It would continue to support all efforts to alleviate their suffering and thanked the Government of Bangladesh for keeping its borders open and allowing more than 600 thousand Rohingya to shelter on its territory.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.